

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14 EB-11 COME-00 TRSE-00 INT-08

SCEM-02 SIL-01 LAB-06 OPIC-12 CIEP-02 DRC-01 /179 W

----- 054574

R 061847Z DEC 73

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6204

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, UK, PINT

SUBJECT: NUM LEADER ASSESSES COAL DISPUTE

REF: LONDON'S 13982

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: JOE GORMLEY, PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL UNION OF MINeworkERS (NUM), TOLD US THAT HE IS STILL TRYING VERY HARD TO OBTAIN SOME IMPROVEMENT IN THE COAL BOARD'S LAST OFFER BEFORE THE NUM EXECUTIVE MEETING DECEMBER 13. OTHERWISE, THE STRIKE WILL CONTINUE WELL INTO JANUARY. GORMLEY SEES LITTLE BENEFIT FOR THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MINERS IN AN EARLY ELECTION, NO MATTER WHICH PARTY

WINS IT. HE IS ALSO DUBIOUS ABOUT PROPOSALS TO BRING IN THE TUC TO RESOLVE THE DISPUTE. AT THE SAME TIME HE CONTEMPLATES AN EASING OF THE PRESSURE THROUGH SOME SOFTENING OF THE BAN DURING THE CHRISTMAS PERIOD, LARGELY AS A PUBLIC GESTURE. END SUMMARY

2. GORMLEY DISCUSSED THE CURRENT STATE OF PLAY IN THE COAL DISPUTE WITH THE CANADIAN AND EMBASSY LABOR ATTACHES. GORMLEY INSISTS THAT HE IS SEARCHING IN EVERY NOOK AND CRANNY FOR SOMETHING WHICH WILL ALLOW HIM TO GO TO THE MINERS WITH AN IMPROVED OFFER FROM THE NATIONAL COAL BOARD AND THUS END THE DISPUTE. HE PLANS TO SUGGEST TO THE NCB A PRACTICE NOW IN USE IN EUROPEAN COAL AND STEEL COMMUNITY WHEREBY COAL MINERS ARE PAID A CERTAIN SUM FOR EVERY DAY THEY GO DOWN INTO THE PITS. THIS DEVICE, HE SAID, IS EMPLOYED TO STABILIZE MANPOWER IN THE COAL INDUSTRY AND WOULD BE FEASIBLE HERE. (GORMLEY WILL BE ATTENDING AN EC COAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING IN LUXEMBOURG TODAY (DECEMBER 6) WHERE HE WILL EXPLORE THIS AND SIMILAR IDEAS IN CURRENT USAGE IN EC COUNTRIES.)

3. GORMLEY IS CONVINCED THAT WERE IT NOT FOR THE INTERFERENCE OF OPPOSITION LEADER HAROLD WILSON, THE MINERS COULD HAVE LEFT THEIR MEETING WITH THE PRIME MINISTER LAST WEEK (REFTEL) WITH AN IMPROVED OFFER, BASED ON A FORM OF "PORTAL-TO-PORTAL" OVERTIME PAY, EVEN "IF HEATH HAD AGREED TO ONLY A FRACTION OF WHAT WE WANTED." GORMLEY SAID HE HAD DISCUSSED THIS IDEA WITH WILSON SO THAT THE OPPOSITION LEADER COULD PRIVATELY RELAY IT TO THE PRIME MINISTER. INSTEAD, WILSON PUBLICLY PROPOSED THE OVERTIME PAY IDEA AND HEATH WAS FORCED TO REJECT IT PUBLICLY ONCE IT ENTERED THE HIGHLY-CHARGED POLITICAL ARENA. (GORMLEY INDICATED IN EVERY EARTHY LANGUAGE HIS BITTERNESS OVER THE WILSON ACTION).

4. THE NEXT MEETING OF THE MINERS' EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE WILL TAKE PLACE NEXT THURSDAY, DECEMBER 13 AND WILL THEREFORE BE A VERY CRUCIAL ONE. UNLESS THERE IS AN IMPROVED OFFER BY THAT TIME, GORMLEY BELIEVES THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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COAL DISPUTE WILL CONTINUE UNTIL WELL INTO JANUARY. HE SAID THAT THE LEFT-WING FORCES WITHIN THE EXECUTIVE (LED BY GENERAL SECRETARY LAWRENCE DALEY, A FORMER COMMUNIST, AND VICE PRESIDENT MICHAEL MCGAHEY, AN ACTIVE COMMUNIST) MAY ACTUALLY SEEK A STRIKE BALLOT AT THE NEXT WEEK'S MEETING, BUT WITHOUT ATTACHING A RECOMMENDATION FROM THE EXECUTIVE. HE ALSO WILL INSIST THAT THE BALLOT VOTE BE SPEEDED UP SO THAT IT

TAKES 7-8 DAYS INSTEAD OF THREE TO FOUR WEEKS. HE WANTS A SPEEDY VOTE, HE SAYS, TO PREVENT THE COMMUNISTS FROM USING A LONGER PERIOD TO SWAY THE MINERS. GORMLEY HAS LONG FAVORED A BALLOT VOTE "BECAUSE I WANT TO KNOW WHERE THE MINERS STAND," BUT HE INSISTS THAT THE EXECUTIVE RECOMMEND TO THE MINERS WHAT POSITION IT FAVORED, THAT IS, "STAND UP AND BE COUNTED." GORMLEY INDICATED THAT WHILE HE CONTROLS A RAZOR THIN MAJORITY OF THE BOARD, THE MODERATES, THEY ARE VERY UNCERTAIN ABOUT WHETHER A BALLOT WILL LEAD TO A HARDENING OR SOFTENING OF THE MINERS' ATTITUDE.

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5. IN ANY EVENT, GORMLEY IS HOPEFUL THAT THE NUM "WILL EASE THE PRESSURE OF THE OVERTIME BAN" DURING THE CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY PERIOD. HE SAID HE IS VERY SENSITIVE TO PUBLIC OPINION, BUT HIS OWN PERSONAL EXPERIENCE HAS INDICATED TO HIM, DESPITE ANY PUBLIC OPINION POLLS TO THE CONTRARY, THAT THERE IS CONSIDERABLE SUPPORT FOR THE MINERS IN THE COUNTRY. HE INSISTED THAT THE MINERS HAVE A VERY GOOD CASE. IN ADDITION, THE OVERALL ENERGY CRISIS, WHICH HE SAID IS FAR MORE SERIOUS THAN THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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GOVERNMENT WILL ADMIT, GIVES FURTHER SOLIDITY TO THEIR POSITION.

6. GORMLEY IS NOT TOO SANGUINE ABOUT SUGGESTIONS MAINLY FROM THE PRESS THAT THE GOVERNMENT BRING IN THE TUC LEADERSHIP TO INTERVENE AS PEACEMAKERS IN THE DISPUTE. NOR DOES HE BELIEVE THAT THE WHITELAW APPOINTMENT CHANGES ANYTHING SUBSTANTIALLY. GORMLEY WAS ALSO DUBIOUS ABOUT A DEMAND TO THE TUC BY JACK JONES, LEADER OF THE TRANSPORT AND GENERAL WORKERS UNION (TGWU), THAT IT CALL A SPECIAL TUC CONGRESS IN THE NEW YEAR WHICH, INTER ALIA, WOULD INVOLVE AN ALL-OUT ATTACK ON THE INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS LAW. SUCH A CONGRESS, SAID GORMLEY, WOULD RESULT IN A ONE-DAY STRIKE, ONLY PARTIALLY SUPPORTED BY TUC AFFILIATES, WHICH WOULD BE MEANINGLESS AND WOULD DEMONSTRATE TUC DISUNITY.

7. AS TO WHETHER THE COAL AND OTHER DISPUTES MIGHT FORCE A SNAP ELECTION, GORMLEY BELIEVES A SPRING ELECTION IS LIKELY. HE SAID SUCH AN ELECTION WOULD RESULT EITHER IN A HEATH VICTORY OR WITH NO PARTY A CLEAR VICTOR. HE IS FEARFUL THE RESULTING CHAOS COULD PLAY INTO THE HANDS OF ULTRA-RIGHT FORCES IN THE COUNTRY AND MIGHT ULTIMATELY LEAD TO TOTALITARIANISM.

8. GORMLEY ALSO TOUCHED BRIEFLY ON GENERAL INTERNATIONAL ISSUES. HE SAID THAT SOONER OR LATER BRITISH TUC WILL HAVE TO ACCEPT THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY AND HE SUGGESTED THAT SUCH ANTI-EC LEADERS AS HUGH SCANLON WERE HYPOCRITICAL ABOUT THE EC SINCE THEY COOPERATED WITH IT THROUGH THE BACK DOOR. (AN AUEW LEADER, JOHN BOYD, IS A MEMBER OF ONE OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEES OF THE EC EUROPEAN COAL AND STEEL COMMUNITY). HE ALSO BELIEVES THAT IT IS NECESSARY TO TALK TO THE SOVIET TRADE UNIONS AND HE SEES NO HARM IN COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE ICFTU,

THE WFTU AND THE WCL ON TRADE UNION MATTERS. HE SAID THE AMERICAN TRADE UNION MOVEMENT IS UNREALISTIC IN OPPOSING EAST-WEST TRADE UNION CONTACTS. GORMLEY ADDED THAT IT IS ESSENTIAL FOR THE MINERS TO DEAL WITH PROBLEMS IN THEIR INDUSTRY IN CONCERT WITH RUSSIANS, FRENCHMEN, AND OTHER MINERS. HE SAID HE WAS PLANNING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TO ATTEND A MINERS' SAFETY CONFERENCE TAKING PLACE IN MOSCOW NEXT YEAR. GORMLEY ALSO ANNOUNCED THAT HE IS PLANNING A VISIT IN MARCH, AT HIS OWN INITIATIVE, TO NORTH AND SOUTH VIETNAM (TO DISCUSS REHABILITATION) AS WELL AS TO THE CHINESE PEOPLES REPUBLIC. HE WILL BE ACCOMPANIED BY TWO MEMBERS OF THE NUM LEFT-WING.

9. COMMENT: GORMLEY APPEARS TO BE SEARCHING, ALMOST A SHADE DESPERATELY, FOR A WAY OUT IN THE COAL DISPUTE. HE WANTS, IN HIS OWN WORDS, TO "GET OFF THE HOOK" AS HE FINDS HIMSELF INCREASINGLY PRESSED FROM BOTH WITHIN AND WITHOUT HIS UNION. ANNENBERG

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